

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

September 2, 2010

U.S. Shifts from Military to Civilian-Led Mission in Iraq	1
President Obama Welcomes Netanyahu, Abbas to the White House	1
White House Sets Out to Reform Export Controls.....	2
United States Imposes New Sanctions on North Korea	2
Pakistan Relief Efforts Continue, Large and Small.....	3

U.S. Shifts from Military to Civilian-Led Mission in Iraq

President discusses mission change in nationally televised speech

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States has ended its seven-and-a-half-year-old military operation in Iraq and is shifting to a civilian-led mission to build a partnership with Iraq that will strengthen its government, industry and people, President Obama says.

“As our military draws down, our dedicated civilians — diplomats, aid workers and advisers — are moving into the lead to support Iraq as it strengthens its government, resolves political disputes, resettles those displaced by war, and builds ties with the region and the world,” Obama said in a nationally televised speech from the White House August 31.

“Only Iraqis can build a democracy within their borders. What America can do, and will do, is provide support for the Iraqi people as both a friend and partner,” he said.

Obama said the Iraqi people held credible elections this year that drew a strong voter turnout, and a caretaker administration is in place as Iraqis form a government based on that election. He encouraged Iraq’s leaders to move forward “with a sense of urgency” to form an inclusive government that is just, accountable and representative to the Iraqi people.

Vice President Biden was in Iraq August 31 for a ceremony marking the change in mission and a change of command. He is also meeting Iraq’s senior leaders, according to Antony Blinken, Biden’s national security adviser.

The last U.S. combat brigade rolled out of Iraq August 19, ending a military operation that toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein. The current U.S. military personnel, numbering less than 50,000, will remain in Iraq with a new mission as advisers assisting Iraq’s security forces; supporting Iraqi troops in targeted counterterrorism missions; and protecting U.S. civilians, Obama said.

Speaking for only the second time from the Oval Office, Obama said that “the Iraqi people now have lead responsibility for the security of their country.”

Obama pledged on February 27, 2009, to end America’s combat mission in Iraq, shrink the number of U.S. forces, strengthen Iraq’s forces and support Iraq’s government. Under the terms of a security agreement signed between the United States and Iraq, all U.S. military personnel

must leave Iraq by the end of 2011. U.S. military operations began in Iraq in March 2003.

In June 2009 U.S. forces withdrew from Iraqi cities. Subsequent missions were at the request of the Iraqi government and were carried out with Iraqi security forces.

On Afghanistan, the president said that with the reduction of military units in Iraq, the United States and its allies can move more effectively to break the Taliban insurgents’ momentum, especially along the border with Pakistan. He said the United States will continue to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida while preventing Afghanistan from again serving as a base for terrorists.

President Obama Welcomes Netanyahu, Abbas to the White House

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to the White House September 1 for brief consultations before the two leaders meet later to begin direct peace talks.

Obama told reporters during a late afternoon briefing that the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority have taken important steps to build confidence and engaged in several rounds of proximity talks since May in the face of some difficult circumstances. But he said that both leaders have come to Washington in a sincere effort to reach the goal of a two-state solution that ends the conflict and ensures the rights and security of both Israelis and Palestinians. It has been nearly two years since direct talks have been held, Obama said.

Obama is hosting Netanyahu and Abbas, along with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and King Abdullah of Jordan, at a White House dinner before direct peace talks begin September 2. They will be joined by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and others who have worked to move the talks toward renewed direct negotiations.

The president held separate bilateral meetings with the four world leaders in the Oval Office.

At a briefing August 20, Clinton told reporters that with the relaunch of direct talks to resolve remaining core issues, the peace process could be completed within a year. She said the talks will address issues that have been at the heart of negotiations since 1979.

Core issues to be resolved in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process include determining the final borders of a

Palestinian state, the future of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements in occupied areas, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, water rights, and future relations between the two states that include assurances of Israeli security.

"The president and I are encouraged by the leadership of Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas and fully share their commitment to the goal of two states — Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security," Clinton told reporters.

Obama said the purpose of these talks is clear. The negotiations are intended to resolve all final status issues, he added.

White House Sets Out to Reform Export Controls

Washington — President Obama has unveiled a plan to streamline and make more consistent the nation's export controls on weapons and commercial technologies that have a potential for military use.

In a videotaped message to an August 31 export controls conference, the president said his reform will fundamentally change what is controlled and how it is controlled within a system that covers tens of thousands of items.

The president said the changes will strengthen national security by focusing the U.S. government's efforts on the most sensitive products and technologies and by enhancing the competitiveness of key U.S. technology and manufacturing industries.

Decisions on whether an item requires an export license will be based on a single unified set of criteria, and different government lists of goods covered by export controls will be merged into a single tiered system, the White House said in an August 30 fact sheet. This system will differentiate between categories of military and commercial products based on how critical they are to the nation's defense interests.

Of the two primary lists the U.S. government maintains, one covers items with direct warfare applications and the other includes commercial products with a potential for military use, such as encryption software and airplane parts.

An initial government evaluation of one product category — military vehicles — found that a more relaxed regime could apply to more than 70 percent of items, and export restrictions could be completely removed from one-third.

"While there is still more work to be done, taken together, these reforms will focus our resources on the threats that

matter most, and help us work more effectively with our allies in the field," Obama said.

Some U.S. allies have complained that U.S. export controls dating back to the Cold War have prevented them from buying U.S. technologies and products essential to their own and common national security interests.

U.S. manufacturers have pushed for years for the relaxation of the U.S. export control system, arguing that it undermines their global competitiveness. An interagency review the president ordered a year ago confirmed that the current system is overly complicated, contains too many redundancies and tries to protect too many items.

Obama has sought changes to export rules as part of his broader initiative to double U.S. exports in five years.

U.S. manufacturers have welcomed the proposed reform.

"These changes are the most important in at least 20 years in terms of defense, aerospace and technology exports," said Bill Reinsch, president of the National Foreign Trade Council, a group that advocates free trade. "We're very happy."

United States Imposes New Sanctions on North Korea

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States broadened financial sanctions against North Korea to block the U.S. assets of entities that trade in conventional arms, luxury goods and counterfeit currency or engage in money laundering, drug smuggling and other "illicit economic activities" that enrich the highest levels of the regime of Kim Jong-il, the U.S. Treasury says.

Treasury Under Secretary Stuart Levey said the action, which imposes new sanctions against four North Korean citizens and eight companies, was taken by President Obama in a new executive order issued August 30.

"The president decided that North Korea's continued provocative actions — such as its unprovoked attack on the South Korean naval ship Cheonan in March of this year, which resulted in the ship's sinking and the deaths of 46 sailors, its test of a nuclear device and missile launches in 2009, its violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions ... and its illicit and deceptive practices in international markets — justify additional sanctions," Levey told reporters.

"The destructive course that the North Korean government is charting is facilitated by a lifeline of cash

generated through a range of illicit activities," he added. "North Korea's government helps maintain its authority by placating privileged elites with money and perks, such as luxury goods like jewelry, luxury cars and yachts."

Levey said North Korea receives millions of dollars annually from arms sales outlawed by the United Nations and from illicit criminal activities. One of the entities targeted by these new sanctions is a shadowy network known as Office 39, which is reportedly a branch of the Korean Workers' Party. The network raises hard currency to pay for luxury items like liquor, exotic food and expensive cars for friends of Kim Jong-Il, Levey said.

Also targeted in the sanctions are Green Pine Associated Corporation and its parent company, the Reconnaissance General Bureau, and the bureau's commander, Lieutenant General Kim Yong Chol, Levey said. The Treasury Department also targeted Ri Hong-sop, believed to be the former head of the Yongbyon nuclear complex; Ri Je-son, believed to be director general of the General Bureau of Atomic Energy; and Yun Ho-jin.

Sanctions were also imposed against the Korea Taesong Trading Company, Korea Heungjin Trading Company, Munitions Industry Department, Second Academy of Natural Sciences, and Second Economic Committee.

Robert Einhorn, the State Department's special adviser for nonproliferation and arms control, speaking at the same press briefing, said the actions being taken by the United States are intended to convince the North Korean regime that it will face consequences if it engages in provocative and unacceptable behavior. He added that these actions are not being taken against the North Korean people, who are the victims of the regime's actions.

Pakistan Relief Efforts Continue, Large and Small

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States is working across a number of fronts, large and small, to help Pakistan cope in the aftermath of torrential monsoon rains that pounded the country and flooded towns and villages, killing 1,500 people, displacing millions of Pakistanis from their homes, disrupting lives and livelihoods.

The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad announced September 1 that the United States is providing \$2 million to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to help the organization provide emergency relief supplies for health, shelter, drinkable water, and sanitation and hygiene programs.

"With the funding, IOM can quickly provide shelter materials and other relief supplies to flood-affected areas,

including Thatta District where thousands of displaced people are returning as floods recede," the embassy said.

This logistics operation includes a trucking service for humanitarian aid that allows relief supplies to be transported to hubs for onward distribution by mule, jeep, aircraft or other means, the embassy said. More logistics hubs will be created based on need.

The U.S. flood-relief priorities are to reach those in crisis and use all appropriate U.S. government resources efficiently and effectively, the embassy said.

The United States has committed \$150 million for Pakistan flood relief and diverted another \$50 million from a multiyear, multibillion dollar development plan for Pakistan to assist with flood relief.

In another project to help provide fresh funds to local economies and help repair infrastructure damaged by flooding, the United States is launching a new program to provide 21 days of work to approximately 4,800 households in Swat.

"In each target community a tool kit is being distributed that includes wheelbarrows, crow bars, shovels, hoes, hammers and steel pans," the embassy said. "With these tools, the teams are working to construct roads and repair bridges in flood-damaged areas."

This work serves several needs. The income from the jobs allows workers to buy much-needed food and supplies in local markets, spurring economic renewal and early recovery, the embassy said.

A group of Pakistani, U.S. and international organizations — civilian and military — met at Pakistan Air Force Base Chaklala at Rawalpindi on August 28 to form a joint aviation coordination cell. It is designed to streamline air operations that support Pakistan's relief efforts.

It was created by retired Lieutenant General Nadeem Ahmed, chairman of Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The commander of Pakistan Army Aviation Command, Major General Raja Muhammad Arif Nazir, was named to chair the joint coordination cell.

The coordination cell will help consolidate efforts among the Pakistani and international relief organizations and provide a means to best direct relief to areas most affected by the flooding. It represents "a huge success going forward," said U.S. Air Force Colonel Greg Nelson, director of U.S. mobility forces for humanitarian assistance to Pakistan.

In addition to the \$200 million the United States has

committed since the flooding began July 29, the United States has provided assistance in the form of halal meals, pre-fabricated steel bridges and other infrastructure support, and air support to transport supplies and rescue people in remote locations, the embassy said.

Through August 29, U.S. aircraft — helicopters and cargo planes — have evacuated more than 10,000 people and delivered more than 3 million pounds (1.36 million kilos) of relief supplies, according to an embassy fact sheet. Two more U.S. helicopters arrived in Pakistan September 1 to help with relief efforts.

“American business and private citizens are also making generous contributions to assist the people of Pakistan,” the embassy said. “The private sector has donated \$8.39 million in contributions to flood relief efforts.”

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, working with the U.S.-based Ad Council, has released public service announcements to encourage Americans and businesses to make donations to the Pakistan Relief Fund established by the State Department.

(Preceding items distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://america.gov>)